

BASEBALL

on cable is still a

BIG HIT

*Wired medium to carry 2,187 games,
33% more than broadcast TV*

By Kim McAvoy

Baseball still has a home on broadcast television, but once again, many viewers will have to rely heavily on cable to see their hometown team play during the 1999 season.

This year, BROADCASTING & CABLE's annual baseball survey reveals that the number of baseball games on broadcast TV stations fell slightly compared to those carried in 1998. However, games on regional cable networks continue to grow—increasing 6.3% over last year.

According to the survey, the average

number of broadcast games per team fell from 55.2 in 1998 to 54.9 in 1999—a half a percentage point decline from last year. At the same time, the average number of baseball games on cable rose from 68.6 in 1998 to 72.9 in 1999.

While the total number of over-the-air games has not changed dramatically, cable networks are still ahead of broadcasters, with 2,187 games lined up this year, 541 (or 33%) more than the 1,646 games that stations plan to air this season. The migration of games to cable is an ongoing trend that began in earnest in 1997 (see chart, page 24). All told, cable will air 129 more games

than it did in 1998.

Last season, there was a major scale-back in the number of games on broadcast TV. But this year, some local stations actually increased their commitment to baseball. For example, the broadcast TV schedule for the Oakland Athletics has 25 more games (now airing on KICU-TV, San Jose, Calif.), the Atlanta Braves added 19 on WUPA(TV), the Minnesota Twins (KMSP-TV, Minneapolis) are up by 10 games and the Anaheim Angels on KCAL(TV) in Los Angeles are also up six games.

But those gains were offset by significant losses in over-the-air games for other markets. There will be no local

Local TV/radio rights
top \$380 million

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Team-by-team
TV/radio survey

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Yankees and Mets
find new TV homes

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Networks hope to
repeat rating success

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broadcast coverage of the Cincinnati Reds this season (BROADCASTING & CABLE, March 22). Reds games will be carried exclusively on Fox Sports Ohio. And the Montreal Expos will only have 16 over-the-air TV telecasts, compared to 40 last year.

Last season, Fox Sports Ohio had both the broadcast TV and cable rights and bought airtime on Cincinnati'sWSTR-TV for 30 games and on WKRC-TV for 15 games. But this year, Fox Sports Ohio's deal with the Reds is only for the cable rights.

"We've done over-the-air agreements in the past. But we couldn't reach an agreement with any over-the-air carriers that made sense," says Steve Liverani, senior vice president and general manager for Fox Sports Ohio. So the regional cable network is offering 85 regular season games—35 more than last season. The broadcast rights have been up for the taking, says Liverani. "But no one is knocking on the Reds' door."

"We'd love to have over-the-air coverage," says Rob Butcher, director of media relations for the Reds. But WKRC-TV insists it was never approached by the Reds.

"We would have worked out a limited deal, but we never heard from the Reds," says William Moll, president and general manager at WKRC-TV.

So far, there has been little if any public outcry over the lack of interest in the Reds telecasts, despite the fact that the situation was well publicized earlier this year. However, once the baseball season begins it could be a dif-

ferent story.

"Right now people are in a basketball mode—all they care about is basketball. But come opening day, I think it will hit them and I expect [the Reds] will get calls," says Sean Keeler, sports media columnist for the *Cincinnati Post*. According to Keeler, 33% of Cincinnati viewers don't have access to cable. "I think people will be surprised."

As for the Expos, the uncertainty surrounding the franchise's future has affected its broadcast coverage. Station TQS, which carried 20 games in 1998, declined to cut a new broadcast TV deal with the team because of the strong likelihood that the Expos may be sold and move to another market.

The decrease in over-the-air games

is largely due to the fact that broadcasters are reluctant to preempt network programming for baseball. Today, only a handful of ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox affiliates offer baseball. And those independent TV stations that once had plenty of time for baseball now have obligations to air programming because of their affiliation with the WB and UPN networks.

Some WB affiliates, like KPLR-TV St. Louis, have trimmed back their baseball schedules. "There is more pressure from the network not to preempt," says Bill Lanese, vice president and general manager of KPLR-TV, which cut back the number of Cardinal games from 62 in 1998 to 55 this season.

Nevertheless, this season the Oakland Athletics found KICU-TV in San Jose, an independent station able to accommodate a schedule of 55 games, 30 more than were aired by NBC affiliate KRON-TV in 1998. According to one insider, the A's wanted a new flagship station that would carry more team games.

The public's enthusiasm for the sport last season may also be fueling the revival of baseball on some of the independent stations this year. KCAL(TV), an independent station in Los Angeles, increased Anaheim Angels games by six and KNWS-TV in Houston, another independent, added five more Astros games to its schedule.

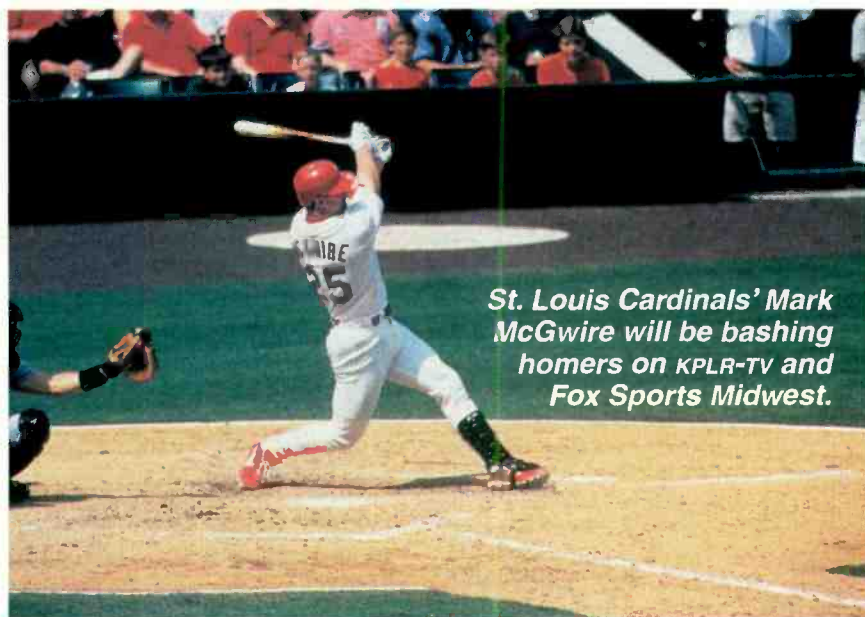
Independent WAMI-TV in Miami has also moved into the baseball sports arena. As the new flagship station for the Florida Marlins, WAMI-TV will air 55 regular season games. "Sports is a great investment," says Jon Miller,

Cable scores in late innings

Baseball telecasts since 1995

Year	BROADCAST TV		CABLE TV		COMBINED	
	Total games telecast	Average # of telecasts per team	Total games telecast	Average # of telecasts per team	Total games telecast	Average # of telecasts per team
1995*	1,784	63.7	1,232	45.9	3,016	109.6
1996	1,835	65.5	1,287	50.9	3,122	116.4
1997	1,668	59.6	1,737	62.0	3,405	121.6
1998	1,655	55.2	2,058	68.6	3,713	123.8
1999	1,646	54.9	2,187	72.9	3,833	127.8

* Numbers reflect games planned prior to strike-shortened season. Actual numbers were lower.



St. Louis Cardinals' Mark McGwire will be bashing homers on KPLR-TV and Fox Sports Midwest.

president of USA Broadcasting, which owns WAMI.

"Because we're not part of a network, we have time to really do things with the team," says Miller. "Not only are we going to cover the games, but we'll have pre- and post-coverage that other teams are not getting on broadcast TV." He says the station expects to spend up to \$30,000 per game in production costs and it has launched a major promotional campaign for the upcoming season.

WAMI-TV also broadcasts the Miami Heat, and despite basketball's late start this year, the games have been a ratings success, according to Miller. With the Heat and the Marlins, Miller says the station has "made a real commitment to local sports in South Florida."

Baseball may also be a chance for UPN affiliates to win back viewers. This season the network suffered a dramatic audience decline that might explain why several UPN affiliates have beefed up baseball coverage on their station schedules. WUPA(TV) in Atlanta will carry 30 Braves games; last season, the Paramount station ran only 11 games.

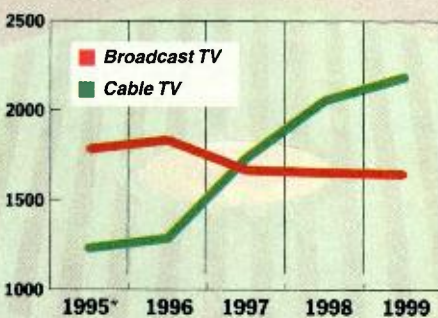
"We're thrilled with the package. It's a wonderful opportunity to have a local identity," says Linda Danna, WUPA's senior vice president and general manager. "The network does make a lot of demands. But fortunately, a lot of the games are in daytime and we'll air some in late fringe," Danna continues.

The Braves, which buy airtime on WUPA, were so pleased with the deal that the team wanted to place more games on broadcast TV, says Jim Williams, executive vice president and general sales manager for WTBS. "We wanted to make the product more available," says Williams. WTBS(TV), which along with the Braves is also owned by Turner Broadcasting, will air 90 games. The Braves' principal outlet remains WTBS(TV). The team has also put together a 22-station network that will broadcast games throughout the Southeast.

At UPN affiliate KMSP-TV Minneapolis, Twins games rose from 15 to 25 since last year. "This year we had more lead time to add games," says Doug McMonagle, local sales manager for KMSP-TV. "Baseball is a good sport to add. We will have to preempt some nights but we've tried to put the games in where it won't be a problem." And as McMonagle points out, "This is not a big package. We don't have to commit

Batters up on cable

Total games scheduled for telecast on...



an entire marketing department to sell inventory."

Paramount Stations Group's WPSG(TV) Philadelphia is the new flagship station for the Phillies. Last season the WB affiliate WPHL-TV carried 70 Phillies games. WPSG has made the same commitment and is involved in a revenue-sharing partnership with the team. "We already had a deal with the Flyers and the 76ers. It made sense for us to strike a deal with the Phillies.

We'll have a handful of preemptions but it won't be significant," says Kevin O'Kane, vice president and general manager.

The increase in cable games is due to the continued growth in regional networks, which have aggressively sought the rights to both cable and broadcast games. There are now 25 regional networks on the baseball scene and some of them have bumped up their coverage.

The Toronto Blue Jays have added 40 more cable games this season, which will be carried on SportsNet, and Fox Sports Net West 2 is adding 40 more Dodgers games.

The most significant drop in games telecast on cable was in Atlanta, where the Braves increased its over-the-air TV coverage. Only 29 Braves games will run on Fox Sports South versus 45 last season. Fox Sport South's contract calls for a minimum of 25 games per season and runs through 2006. ■

Show me the money

Local TV and radio outlets pay \$380 million for rights; teams to reap \$172 million more in revenue

By Kim McAvoy

Major League Baseball continues to score big as local broadcasters and regional cable networks spend millions for the rights to carry their games this season. The TV and radio industries paid roughly \$380.7 million in rights fees, according to BROADCASTING & CABLE's annual survey.

Also, more teams are making money through partnerships with local TV outlets or by producing games and selling ad time themselves. This season, revenue from those efforts could reach an estimated \$172.3 million.

One example of the kind of creative baseball rights agreements that have recently cropped up is the new revenue-sharing arrangement now underway between the Phillies and WPSG(TV) in Philadelphia. The partnership between the Paramount-owned station and the Phillies includes broadcast TV, cable, and radio ad revenue, which could total as much as \$10.8 million

this season. But despite such agreements on the broadcast side, cable is still king on the MLB rights front—especially Fox Sports Net—through its 10 owned-and-operated networks and six affiliated networks.

Fox Sports Net along with Midwest Sportschannel, Home Team Sports (HTS) and New England Sports Network have the cable rights to 27 of 30 MLB teams—the L.A. Dodgers, Philadelphia Phillies and Texas Rangers are the exceptions. Eleven cable networks have both broadcast TV and cable rights representing \$142.6 million in fees this season.

Sports Channel Florida acquired all of the Marlins' TV rights—both broadcast and cable—this season for \$10 million. They sold 55 games to WAMI-TV in Miami for \$3.2 million.

In New York, Fox Sports New York now has the Mets' cable and broadcast TV rights. Fox Sports New York already had a long-term deal for the Mets' cable games. This season FSNY paid \$8 mil-

Local TV and Radio Lineup

Team	BROADCAST TV						CABLE					RADIO				
	Flagship	# of reg. season games	# of stations in net.	Contract status yr./yrs.	1999 rights (millions)	1999 est. revenue (millions)	Regional network	# of reg. season games	Contract status yr./yrs.	1999 rights (millions)	1999 est. revenue (millions)	Flagship	# of stations in net.	Contract status yr./yrs.	1999 rights (millions)	1999 est. revenue (millions)
AMERICAN LEAGUE EAST																
Baltimore Orioles	WJZ-TV (ch. 13)	37	17	3/4	--	--	Home Team Sports	85	3/10	\$20	--	WBAL(AM) 1090 khz	25	3/3	\$3.5	--
CBS, which owns WJZ-TV and HTS, pays \$20 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. It sublicenses games to WNUV-TV Baltimore and WBDC(TV) Washington. WTOP(AM) pays percentage of WBAL(AM)'s rights expenses.																
Boston Red Sox	WLVI-TV (ch. 56)	75	6	--	--	--	New England Sports Network	78	17/20	\$10	--	WEEI(AM) 850 khz	56	4/6	\$4.4	--
JCS New England Television Network pays \$10 million for broadcast rights; has two-year affiliate agreement with WLVI-TV. Team owns 48% of NESN.																
New York Yankees	WNYW-TV (ch. 5)	50	0	--	--	--	MSG Network	100	11/12	\$52.5	--	WABC(AM) 770 khz	30	3/5	--	\$1+
MSGN holds rights to broadcast TV, cable and radio and sublicenses 50 games to WNYW(TV) for \$17.5 million per year in two-year deal.																
Toronto Blue Jays	CBC	40	0	1/3	\$6	--	TSN Sportsnet	80/40	3/5/1/3	\$12/\$5	--	CHUM(AM) 1050 khz	35	2/3	\$2	--
Headline Sports Radio has radio rights. Pending CRTC approval, CTV, which owns Sportsnet, has purchased TSN.																
Tampa Bay Devil Rays	WWVB-TV (ch. 32) WTSP(TV) (ch. 10)	54/13	7	2/5/2/5	--	\$2-4	Sports Channel Florida	64	2/5	\$4.4	--	WFLA(AM) 970 khz	16	2/7	\$3.7	--
Team retains broadcast TV rights.																
AMERICAN LEAGUE CENTRAL																
Chicago White Sox	WGN-TV (ch. 9)	53	0	2/2	--	\$13	Fox Sports Chicago	103	15/15	\$4.5	--	WMVP(AM) 1000 khz	39	4/10	\$5	--
Team and WGN-TV have revenue-sharing partnership.																
Cleveland Indians	WUAB(TV) (ch. 43)	75	4	1/3	\$5	--	Fox Sports Ohio	70	4/6-7	\$5	--	WTAM(AM) 1100 khz	35+	--	--	\$6
WUAB(TV) holds broadcast TV rights but team shares revenue. Team retains radio rights, sells all inventory. WMMS(FM), co-owned with WTAM, airs 7 games.																
Detroit Tigers	WKBD(TV) (ch. 50)	40	3	2/5	\$2	--	Fox Sports Detroit	98	3/3	\$12	--	WJR(AM) 760 khz	49	4/5	--	\$3
Team retains radio rights.																
Kansas City Royals	KMBC-TV (ch. 32) KCWE(TV) (ch. 29)	15/35	12	--	--	--	Fox Sports Rocky Mountain	30	3/3	\$3-3.5	--	KMBZ(AM) 980 khz	84	2/3	\$1	--
Fox Sports Rocky Mountain holds broadcast TV and cable rights; pays KMBC-TV to carry games. KMBC controls KCWE through local marketing agreement.																
Minnesota Twins	KMSP-TV (ch. 9)	25	0	--	--	--	Midwest Sports Channel	105	2/4	\$2-3	--	WCCO(AM) 830 khz	69	1/2	\$1.6	--
CBS Cable's Midwest Sports Channel pays \$2 million to \$3 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. Midwest sublicenses 25 games to KMSP-TV.																
AMERICAN LEAGUE WEST																
Anaheim Angels	KCAL(TV) (ch. 9)	50	0	4/5	--	\$10-12	Fox Sports West	50	1/10	\$5	--	KLAC(AM) 570 khz	5	1/5	--	\$6
Team, which is owned by Disney, shares revenue with KCAL(TV) and KLAC(AM). Team retains radio rights.																
Oakland Athletics	KICU-TV (ch. 36)	55	2	1/5	\$4	--	Fox Sports Bay Area	57	3/7	\$6	--	KABL(AM) 960 khz	15	1/2	--	\$2
Team retains radio rights.																
Seattle Mariners	KIRO-TV (ch. 7) KSTW(TV) (ch. 11)	42/24	5	2/3	\$5	--	Fox Sports Northwest	62	3/4	\$5	--	KIRO(AM) 710 khz	30	3/5	\$4.9	--
KIRO-TV holds broadcast TV rights.																
Texas Rangers	KXTX-TV (ch. 39) KXAS-TV (ch. 5)	90/5	1	4/5	\$7.7	--	Fox Sports Southwest	59	4/5	--	--	KRLD(AM) 1080 khz	68	2/3	\$4.5-5	--
LIN Television, owned by Hicks Muse, which owns Rangers, holds TV rights. LIN owns KXAS-TV and operates KXTX-TV via local marketing agreement; company sublicenses games to Fox.																

Dash (--) indicates column that does not apply. Unless indicated, teams sell rights to a broadcast station or cable network, and the 1999 rights fee is shown. When the team retains rights or is involved in a partnership, estimated 1999 revenue is shown instead of a rights fee. Depending on the team, contract status refers to a rights contract, partnership contract or contract for a non-rightsholder to carry games. In most cases, broadcast TV and radio rightsholders form regional networks—the column shows the number of stations in those networks. Radio stations usually carry all regular-season games.

Team	BROADCAST TV						CABLE					RADIO				
	Flagship	# of reg. season games	# of stations in net.	Contract status yr./yrs.	1999 rights (millions)	1999 est. revenue (millions)	Regional network	# of reg. season games	Contract status yr./yrs.	1999 rights (millions)	1999 est. revenue (millions)	Flagship	# of stations in net.	Contract status yr./yrs.	1999 rights (millions)	1999 est. revenue (millions)
NATIONAL LEAGUE EAST																
Atlanta Braves	WTBS(TV) (ch. 17) WUPA(TV) (ch. 69)	90/30	22	NA	--	\$4.4	Fox Sports South	29	3/10	\$4	NA	WSB(AM) 750 khz	165	5/5	\$3.2	NA
<i>Revenue reflects simultaneous national carriage of games on TBS. WTBS buys airtime from WUPA(TV). Team and WTBS are owned by Turner Broadcasting System.</i>																
Florida Marlins	WAMI-TV (ch. 69)	55	6	--	NA	NA	Sports Channel Florida	70	1/12	\$10	NA	WOAM(AM) 560 khz	15	3/5	\$3.7	--
<i>Sports Channel Florida pays \$10 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. WAMI-TV has six-year deal with Sports Channel; pays \$3.2 million a year for 55 games.</i>																
Montreal Expos	SRC(FR)	16	14	1/1	--	\$2	RDS(FR) TSN(ENG)	40/25	4/4	\$1.8	--	CIQC(AM) CKAC(AM)	5 Eng 26 Fr	1/2 3/3	NA	\$1
<i>Team retains broadcast TV and radio rights; SRC sells some inventory. Expos keep all radio ad revenue.</i>																
New York Mets	WPIX(TV) (ch. 11)	50	0	--	--	--	Fox Sports New York	99	13/30	\$13+	--	WFAN(AM) 660 khz	15	2/2	\$3.5	--
<i>On addition to cable deal, Fox Sports New York pays \$8 million to \$10 million for broadcast TV rights for 1999 and sublicenses 50 games to WPIX(TV). WADO(AM) will broadcast 94 games in Spanish.</i>																
Philadelphia Phillies	WPSG(TV) (ch. 57)	70	1	1/2	--	\$6	Comcast Sports Network	77	2/10	--	\$2.7	WPHT(AM) 1210 khz	18	2/3	--	\$2.1
<i>Team and WPSG(TV) have revenue-sharing partnership for broadcast TV, radio and cable. Phillies partnered with Comcast Cable to form Comcast Sports Network.</i>																
NATIONAL LEAGUE CENTRAL																
Chicago Cubs	WGN-TV (ch. 9)	91	0	--	--	\$33	Fox Sports Chicago	57	1/10	\$15	--	WGN(AM) 720 khz	38	--	--	\$8
<i>Tribune owns team and WGN-AM-TV. Revenue reflects simultaneous national carriage on superstation WGN.</i>																
Cincinnati Reds	--	--	--	--	--	--	Fox Sports Ohio	85	1/6	\$2.5	--	WLW(AM) 700 khz	45	2/3	\$3.5	--
<i>Fox Sports Ohio has deal for cable games only. There are no over-the-air games slated for '99 season.</i>																
Houston Astros	KNWS-TV (ch. 51)	65	5+	NA	NA	NA	Fox Sports Southwest	65	2/8	\$10+	NA	KTRH(AM) 740 khz	50	1/5	NA	\$4+
<i>Fox Sports Southwest pays \$10+ million for broadcast TV and cable rights. Team retains radio rights. KXYZ(AM) is Spanish-language flagship station.</i>																
Milwaukee Brewers	WCGV-TV (ch. 24)	50	0	NA	NA	NA	Midwest Sports Channel	80	2/6	\$2.6	NA	WTMJ(AM) 620 khz	52	2/5	\$2	NA
<i>CBS Cable's Midwest Sports Channel pays \$2.6 million for broadcast TV and cable rights; team shares some revenue. WTMJ has radio rights; team shares revenue.</i>																
Pittsburgh Pirates	WCWB-TV (ch. 22) WPGH(TV) (ch. 53)	14/1	0	NA	NA	NA	Fox Sports Pittsburgh	75	3/4	\$3	NA	KDKA(AM) 1020 khz	40	3/3	--	\$3.5
<i>Fox Sports Pittsburgh pays \$3 million for broadcast TV and cable rights and sublicenses 15 games to TV stations. Team retains radio rights.</i>																
St. Louis Cardinals	KPLR-TV (ch. 11)	55	20	3/3	NA	\$4-5	Fox Sports Midwest	50	3/9	\$3	--	KMOX(AM) 1120 khz	107	3/5	\$5	NA
<i>Team has revenue-sharing arrangement with KPLR-TV.</i>																
NATIONAL LEAGUE WEST																
Colorado Rockies	KWGN-TV (ch. 2)	75	12	--	--	--	Fox Sports Rocky Mountain	50	3/10	\$10+	--	KOA(AM) 850 khz	65	3/5	\$4.5	--
<i>Fox Sports Rocky Mountain pays \$10+ million for broadcast TV and cable rights. Fox buys airtime on KWGN-TV.</i>																
Los Angeles Dodgers	KTLA(TV) (ch. 5)	50	0	3/5	\$15.5	NA	Fox Sports Net West 2	80	NA	NA	NA	KXTA(AM) 1150 khz	26	2/5	\$6-8	NA
<i>KTLA(TV) pays \$15.5 million for broadcast TV and cable rights. It sublicenses games to Fox Sports Net West 2. Fox owns Dodgers. KWKW(AM) broadcasts all games in Spanish. KYTA(AM) airs 60 games in Korean.</i>																
San Diego Padres	KUSI-TV (ch. 51)	23	0	NA	NA	NA	Channel 4	107	3/5	\$5	NA	KFMB(AM) 790 khz	6	3/3	\$3.7	NA
<i>Cox Communications' Channel 4 pays \$5 million for broadcast TV and cable rights and buys airtime on KUSI-TV. Cox keeps all ad revenue.</i>																
San Francisco Giants	KTVU(TV) (ch. 2)	58	6	5/6	\$4.5	NA	Fox Sports Bay Area	57	4/7	\$4.5	NA	KNBR(AM) 680 khz	17	1/6	\$5.5	NA
<i>Team retains five to seven 30-second spots per game on broadcast TV. KTVU(TV) parent Cox Communications and KNBR(AM) are both limited partners in team.</i>																
Arizona Diamondbacks	KTVK(TV) (ch. 3)	75	4	2/10	NA	\$10+	Fox Sports Arizona	60	2/10	\$5+	NA	KTAR(AM) 620 khz	20+	2/10	NA	\$4+
<i>Team retains broadcast TV and radio rights. Team and KTVK have revenue-sharing arrangement. KDRX-TV will broadcast 30 games in Spanish. KPHX(AM) broadcasts all home games in Spanish.</i>																

lion-\$10 million for the broadcast TV rights, according to sources. Fox Sports then sublicensed 50 of the Mets games to WPIX(TV) for an unconfirmed amount. Also in the New York market, Fox's WNYW(TV) paid \$17.5 million for 50 Yankees games this season. MSG Network is the Yankees' broadcast TV, cable and radio rights holder. WABC(AM) broadcasts the Yankees games on radio.

However one of this season's biggest deals was struck by Fox Sports Chicago, which paid \$15 million for the Chicago Cubs' cable rights. In the past, the Cubs' cable games were carried on ChicagoLand TV(CLTV), which is owned—along with the team—by Tribune. But the Cubs went with Fox Sports Chicago because it can reach 3.1 million homes versus CLTV's 1.7 million.

Other cable deals include Fox Sports West, which paid \$5 million for the Anaheim Angels rights as part of a new 10-year deal.



WAMI-TV Miami forked over \$32 million to Sports Channel Florida for rights to broadcast 55 games.

While cable networks remain aggressive in obtaining MLB rights, some TV stations are still willing to shell out money for baseball. This season, independent KICU-TV San Jose, Calif., paid \$4 million for the Oakland Athletics broadcast rights. And WUAB(TV) Cleveland, a UPN affiliate, renewed its rights deal with the Indians for another three years for \$5 million.

The broadcast rights for the Boston Red Sox were sold to JCS New England Television Network for \$10 million. WABU(TV) was the rights holder last year, but now JCS has a two-year deal

with the team and will produce and distribute 75 regular-season games to a network of six New England stations. JCS has affiliate agreements with those stations as well as Tribune's WLVI-TV Boston, which will serve as the Red Sox flagship.

"We're going to saturate New England," says former Boston broadcaster Kevin Dunn, president of JCS New England Television Network. JCS's chairman and major investor is Gene F. Jankowski, former president and chairman of the CBS Broadcast Group.

"The Red Sox are popular in this area. It certainly gives us a product for the community," notes Jim Lapiana, station manager for operations at WPME(TV) Portland, Maine. He says JCS' agreement is a barter deal with JCS selling the majority of the ad spots in the broadcasts.

On the radio side, KNBR(AM) San Francisco renewed its rights deal with the Giants for another six years at \$5.5 million. ■

Whole new ball game

In New York, Yankees jump to WNYW; Mets to WPIX

By Joanna Cagan

In New York, the big baseball news during the off-season was the trade that brought the Yankees future Hall of Famer Roger Clemens and further enhanced the team's claim to a second straight World Championship in 1999.

But perhaps of equal significance in

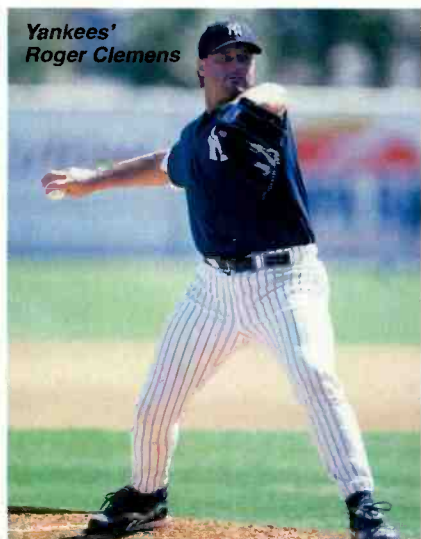
media circles was the shakeup in the broadcast TV outlets for the Yankees and the crosstown contenders, the New York Mets. After 48 years on Tribune's WPIX, the Yankees jumped to Fox's WNYW. And the Mets abandoned WOR-TV and landed at WPIX.

Under a two-year deal, WNYW is reportedly paying \$17.5 million a year

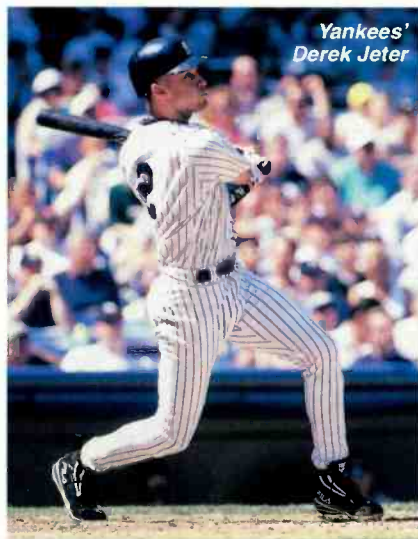
to Madison Square Garden Network to broadcast 50 games a year. That's \$350,000 per game, slightly more than the \$325,000 WPIX had paid in 1998. Under a long-term deal with the Yankees, MSG holds all the TV rights to the Yankees. It plans to telecast 100 games over its regional cable sports network.

"That plus our decision to pick up the second segment of *Seinfeld* in 2001 are the two biggest moves the station's made," says Michael Wach, vice president and general manager of WNYW.

Hailed by many as the best team ever, the 1998 Yankees proved powerful tele-



Yankees' Roger Clemens



Yankees' Derek Jeter



Mets' Al Leiter

vision. Last season's ratings for the Yankees, a year in which the team set a record for the most regular season wins, averaged 6.7 over 50 games on WPIX, while the Mets averaged about 3.9 over 49 games on WWOR-TV.

Having lost the Yankees, WPIX sought and landed the Mets, who, with the signing of slugger Mike Piazza, are expected to make a run at the National League pennant. WPIX signed a two-year deal with Fox Sports New York, which holds all the Mets TV rights and is scheduled to telecast 99 games for its cable viewers. Terms of the WPIX-Fox Sports deal were not disclosed.

Left out of the diamond action this year will be WWOR-TV. "The Mets were looking to restructure the way the deal had been for the entire terms of its existence, and move away from a revenue share and into a rights fee," says Rick Miner, executive producer of sports at the UPN affiliate. "And we were looking to continue on the same basic type of agreement that had worked for both of us for the last 37 years."

More churn in how and where the Yankees and Mets will be televised is in store. MSG's umbrella rights deal with the Yankees is set to expire after the 2000 season. MSG has been in negotiations with the team in hopes of extending the contract. Those talks included the possibility of MSG's parent, Cablevision System, acquiring the team, although no deal has been made.

In an apparent effort to gain some lever-



age in the negotiations, the Yankees signed a letter of intent to merge their operations with the New Jersey Nets of the National Basketball Association. The deal would involve the teams pooling their broadcast and cable rights.

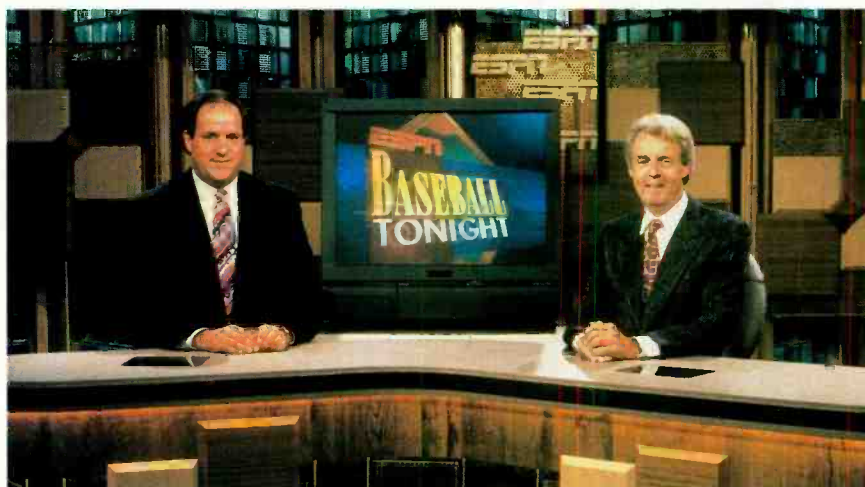
"I think that a Yankee-Nets combination could form the basis for a competitive channel," says Neal Pilson, president of Pilson Communications and former president of CBS Sports. "There is still major risk in creating a second channel where you have an entrenched signal like you do with [Cablevision]," says Pilson.

Even without forming a regional

sports network, the Yankee-Nets would offer hundreds of hours of highly attractive programming, and demand big prices for it. "I'd presume that any deal they made with any outlet would again be record-breaking," says Howard Rubinstein, a spokesman for the Yankees. "It certainly merits it."

Cablevision countered by opening talks aimed at buying the Mets. Most industry insiders agree that no matter how far along the Yankee-Nets deal is, or how serious Cablevision's pursuit of the Mets may be, a Cablevision purchase of the Yankees isn't dead in the water.

"All this is part of a repositioning of the regional cable business," says Pilson. He argues that Cablevision's courting of the Mets is "more of a reaction to and a float of a story than anything significant at this time."



Chris Berman (l) and Peter Gammons on ESPN's daily show, 'Baseball Tonight.'

Prime time pastime

Networks will ensure that baseball is the national obsession

By Joe Schlosser

Baseball was very, very good to its national broadcast and cable partners last year. And with the regular season only days away, the 1999 Major League Baseball season has them hoping for more of the same again this spring.

Fox, FX, Fox Sports Net and ESPN all saw their ratings climb last season on the strength of the Sammy Sosa-Mark McGwire home run derby and the New York Yankees' record-breaking season. It was only four years ago that the networks were worrying about the ramifica-

tions of the 1994 MLB players' strike. Now they are worried about not having enough telecasts on their schedules.

"The great thing about baseball last year was that it produced so many different story lines," says Arthur Smith, Fox Sports Net's executive vice president of programming and production. "Those story lines are continuing this season. Look, there is home run coverage of spring training. Needless to say we are very excited about the upcoming season and we are looking forward to the numbers coming in this season."

The national TV ratings were up across the board during the regular sea-



Mets' Mike Piazza

son in 1998, including FX's 50% jump for its weekly national broadcast. Fox Sports Net's ratings rose 29%, the Fox Broadcast network games spiked 15% over 1997 and ESPN increased nearly 20%, according to Nielsen Media Research. The one sour note from last season was Fox's World Series numbers. The New York Yankees' four-game sweep of the San Diego Padres turned out to be the lowest-rated fall classic ever—14.1 rating/24 share.

"There aren't many sports packages on network television that can point to a 15% increase in a given year," says Ed Goren, the executive producer of Fox Sports. "We are talking about ratings going up in an industry that is becoming more diluted every year," he notes. "As for this year, I would probably be happy holding where we were last season. But what I think you will see is our ratings will be up."

For the Fox Broadcast Network and its cable siblings, the improved ratings were especially important. Between the network's *Game of the Week* telecasts and the combined national and regional reach of FX and Fox Sports Net, the News Corp.-owned entities will be carrying close to 2,000 Major League Baseball games in 1999.

The bulk of those games will be regional games telecasts on the Fox Sports Net regional networks, which combined have the local cable rights to 25 teams. Fox Sports Chicago will add 57 Chicago Cubs telecasts to its roster and altogether the Fox Sports regional cable channels will carry 1,761 games during the 1999 season. Fox Sports Net will carry a weekly Thursday evening game nationally, while FX has a Saturday night national telecast. Between FX and Fox Sports Net's national game, that's another 100-plus telecasts during the regular season. The broadcast entity will start carrying MLB games on June 5th and will air 18 *Game of the Week* telecasts. Fox also has the All-Star game this year, which is being played at Boston's Fenway Park on July 13, a number of divisional playoff games and the American League Championship series.

The Fox deal for network games is entering the fourth year of a five-year, \$575 million contract. Fox also has the rights to the World Series in October 2000. Fox Sports Net and FX are about to start their third season of a five-year, \$172 million deal with Major League Baseball.

As for ESPN, the cable network is

about to start its 10th season of Major League Baseball coverage. ESPN has two seasons, including 1999, left on its \$455 million deal for Wednesday and Sunday night games. The cable channel



NBC's Bob Costas will moonlight at ESPN during the pennant drives.

televise a doubleheader (two separate games nationally at 7:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. ET) every Wednesday night during the regular season and has the exclusive national, telecast rights for a weekly Sunday night game. ESPN2 will jump into the MLB mix in September as the playoff picture develops. ESPN2 will carry double-headers every Wednesday night as well, during September. The all-sports network will also carry the popular *Home Run Derby* the day before the All-Star game and a handful of divisional playoff games.

ESPN's executive vice president of programming, Dick Glover, says the story lines from last season weighed heavily into the network's scheduling of games for 1999. "Certainly when we laid out the schedule we tried to get as

many Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa games as we could," Glover remarks.

Glover says there will be at least three Chicago Cubs, St. Louis Cardinals and New York Yankees games on ESPN's *Sunday Night Baseball* telecasts during the regular season.

NBC is not a part of baseball's regular season coverage, but the network will broadcast the majority of the 1999 post-season games. NBC, which paid \$475 million for its broadcast package, will carry the National League Championship series and the World Series this season. And because of NBC's lack of regular season games, the network is letting its lead baseball announcer, Bob Costas, do a little moonlighting, working a handful of ESPN telecasts down the stretch so that Costas will be "baseball ready" by the playoffs. Costas will be paired with Joe Morgan, who works the post-season with Costas at NBC, during his ESPN stint.

"It's not a case of Bob needing to do baseball games again," says NBC Sports' Ed Markey. "It's just to develop a little bit of a rhythm with Joe [Morgan]. You don't want your announcing team to come on the air having seen each other for the first time at a production meeting the day before. ESPN has been very helpful and kind with this whole arrangement." ■

National broadcast rights

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|-----------------------|---|
| ESPN | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ \$455 million 8-year deal that ends after the 2002 season ■ Approximately 80 Wednesday and Sunday night regular-season games ■ 6 to 12 division series playoff games a year |
| Fox | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ \$575 million 5-year deal that ends after the 2000 season ■ AL championship series in 1999; NL championship series in 2000 ■ 1999 All Star Game; World Series in 2000 |
| FX | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ \$172 million 5-year deal (with Fox Sports Net) that ends after the 2000 season ■ 26-week Saturday night regular-season games |
| Fox Sports Net | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ \$172 million 5-year deal (with FX) that ends after the 2000 season ■ 26-week Thursday night regular-season games ■ Regional networks have the rights to 25 MLB teams |
| NBC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ \$475 million 5-year contract that ends after the 2000 season ■ NL championship series in 1999; AL championship series in 2000 ■ World Series in 1999 |